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HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER:

SONGS AND MADRIGALS. PART III.

BY W. E. HENLEY.

ONLY a freakish wisp of hair?—
Nay, but its wildest, its most trivial whorl
Stands for a slim, enamoured, sweet-fleshed girl!
And so, a tangle of dream and charm and fun,
Its every crook a promise and a snare,
Its every dowle, or genially gadding
Or resolutely curled,
Heartening and madding,
Impales a novel and peculiar world
Of right, essential fantasies,
And shining acts as yet undone,
But in these high, romantic days
Soon, soon to ask our sovran Lord, the Sun,
For countenance and praise,
As of the best his storying eye hath seen,
And his vast memory can parallel,
Among the darling victories—
Beneficent, beautiful, inexpressible—
Of life on time!—
Yet have they flashed and been
In millions, since 'twas his to bring
The heaven-creating Spring,
An angel of adventure and delight,
In all her beauty and all her might and worth,
Home to the citizens of this good, green earth,
To fill them full of joy and pride and spright

Poor souls—they have but time and place
To play their transient little play,
And sing their singular little song,
Ere they are rushed away
Into the antient, undisclosing Night;
And none is left to tell of the fair eyes
That filled them with God's grace,
And turned the iron skies to skies of gold!
None; but the sweetest She herself grows old—
Grows old, and dies;
And, but for such a lovely snatch of hair
As this, none—none could guess, or know
That She was kind and fair,
And He had nights and days beyond compare—
How many dusty and silent years ago!

I send you roses—red, like love,
And white, like death, sweet friend:
Born in your bosom to rejoice,
Languish, and pine, and end.

If the white roses tell of death,
Let the red roses mend
The talk with true stories of love
Unchanging to the end.

Red and white roses, love and death—
What else is left to send?
For what is life but love, the means,
And death, dear heart, the end?

When, in what other life,
Where in what old spent star,
Systems ago, dead vastitudes afar,
Were we two bird and bough, or man and wife?
Or wave and spar?
Or I the beating sea, and you the bar
On which it breaks? I know not, I!
But this, O this, my very dear, I know:
Your voice awakes old echoes in my heart;

And things I say to you now are said once more;
And, sweet, when we two part
I feel I have seen you falter and linger so,
So hesitate, and turn, and cling—yet go,
As once in some immemorable Before,
Once on some fortunate yet thrice-blasted shore
Was it for good?
O, these poor eyes are wet;
And yet, O, yet,
Now it comes back, I would not, if I could,
Forget.

June, and a warm, sweet rain;
June, and the call of a bird:
To a lover in pain
What lovelier word?

Two of each other fain
Happily heart on heart;
So in the wind and rain
Spring bears his part!

O, to be heart on heart
Out in the warm June rain,
God with us from the start,
And no more pain!

Silence, loneliness, darkness
These and of these my fill
While God in the rush of Maytide
Without is working His will.

Without are the wind and the wall-flowers,
The leaves and the nests and the rain,
And in all of them God is making
His beautiful purpose plain.

But I wait in a horror of strangeness—
A tool on His workshop floor,
Worn to the butt, and banished
His hand for evermore.

In Shoreham River, hurrying down
To the live sea,
By working, marrying, breeding Shoreham Town,
Breaking the sunset's wistful and solemn dream,
An old, black rotter of a boat
Past service to the labouring, tumbling flote,
Lay stranded in mid-stream:
With a horrid list,
A frightening lapse from the line,
That made me think of legs and a broken spine:
Soon, all too soon,
Ungainly and forlorn to lie
Full in the eye
Of the cynical, discomfortable moon
That, as I looked, stared from the fading sky,
A clown's face flour'd for work. And bye-and-bye
The wide-winged sunset wanned and waned;
The lean night-wind crept westward, chilling and sighing;
The poor old hulk remained,
Stuck helpless in mid-ebb. And I knew why—
Why, as I looked, my heart felt crying.
For, as I looked, the good green earth seemed dying—
Dying or dead;
And; as I looked on the old beast, I said:
"Dear God, it's I!"

W. E. HENLEY.